

**Between the Lines: the reading and re-imagination
of landscape as text**

By

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Signed Declaration of Originality

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Abstract

The project was a site-specific exploration of the Northern Midlands agricultural property of *Oakdene*, which became a vehicle to investigate hybrid forms of art practice and intersecting narratives relating to landscape. The Midland region of Tasmania is a tapestry of private farmland and *Oakdene* was selected as having representative qualities of the greater Midlands ecology. Moving between riparian, pastoral and forest spaces across 4000 acres, the project observed human/non-human transformation in a highly contested landscape.

Considering the agricultural landscape as text, the project sought to develop suitable methodologies for navigating and responding to continuous change within the boundaries of the property. Through a constant process of re-visitation, walking emerged as my primary mode of engagement, and developed into a methodology for experiencing, mapping, recounting, reframing, and retelling the *Oakdene* landscape(s). I found working across different mediums to be the most appropriate way of negotiating the tensions between natural ecologies and human intervention revealed over time. Through a myriad of on and off-site studio experiments I explored means of landscape representation using photography, sculpture, and video in response to the fluctuating aspects of the site.

Oakdene emerged as an example of ecology under strain, containing intersecting narratives that became central to my investigations. The outcome is a series of speculative works generated by a confrontation with the limits of singular approaches to making and landscape representation, arising from an unexpectedly dynamic Midland environment.

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Introduction

Shortly after commencing this project, I found myself leaning over the kitchen table of a Northern Midlands homestead staring at a map of the 1620ha agricultural property that I was on and granted access to for a period of two years. Jill, the owner of *Oakdene*, was enthusiastically pointing out places of interest – a ‘sea’ of grass to the west; areas along the South Esk river in the east where gnarled trees survived against decades of periodic flooding and opposing drought; remnant forests that were succumbing to the rising infestation of gorse; and others that were skeletal from fire and in a state of recovery and rejuvenation. As she spoke, I followed her finger on the map, met her gaze as her excitement grew, and in sudden serious moments nodded toward her cautions of snakes, hunters, and the importance of shutting closed gates as I passed. I asked questions, and Jill answered them. Conversation drifted to the age of the dog that was panting in the heat and staring at me through the glass of the porch door.

I straightened up and looked down at the map again. Nothing of what Jill was telling me was present in that image. There were no gates, no trees of particular note other than clumps of green things casting shadows, and indeed no blackened areas of burnt eucalypt forest to speak of. There was a momentary silence as we looked upon the property depicted as a photographic aerial survey - the very place that we *were*. What I saw there on the kitchen table was absent of the details, absent of character.

The undertaking of my project was to tease out the details of a geographical landscape, to negotiate spaces, and to live the intimacies of repeated solitary experiences by being in the selected environment. The map Jill and I looked upon showed ‘no roots, no growing, just green lollipops and buildings floating on a page, as if ground were flat and blank, the tree an object not a life’ (Whiston-Spirn 1998, p.51) and by being present with my feet against the earth I sought to challenge landscape representation through my encounters with its dynamic materiality.

The map was a way of seeing the land in some sort of totality, primarily through a system of ownership demarcated by boundaries. My undertaking was to identify *other* totalities and differing ways of framing, even bounding, the property across various media and a myriad of access points. The aerial survey

map was a visual text of which the language was very clear yet actually described very little by design. In that interpretation, the ground was indeed flat (1998, p.51) but it wasn't the ground itself that was important, it was how *much* of it there was. In that sense, the limited language and the context of the information succeeded. My project, however, sought the greater complexities in motion relating to what it means to have possession of place, to nurture growth and maintain control – to create an agricultural environment within wider ecology and for human and non-human to co-exist in a relationship under constant tension.

Oakdene became the site of which to observe those tensions over time. It was a place indicative of the greater surrounds and specific for this project. I define site literally throughout this project as a fixed place of interaction; Oakdene as a property, grounded and locatable. However, Kwon writes that:

[s]ometimes at the cost of a semantic slippage between content and site, other artists who are similarly engaged in site-oriented projects, operating with multiple definitions of the site, in the end find their “locational” anchor in the discursive realm (2004, p.28)

As Kwon notes, by recognising that site, and site-specificity are not particularly fixed my work had room to move between on-site and off-site experiments because site definitions are in fact ‘competing definitions, overlapping with one another and operating simultaneously in various cultural practices’ (Kwon 2004, p.30). Because of this, my project became a model of ideas and methodologies that are adaptable to other places with other texts.

Conceptualising landscape as text was central to giving voice to the site, and creating the conditions for an ongoing visual, performative and interactive dialogue with the land itself. The equivalence between landscape and language was inspired by the work and research of Anne Whiston-Spirn. She writes that ‘[l]andscape has all the features of language. It contains the equivalent of words and parts of speech’ (1998, p.15). Whiston-Spirn continues:

[l]ike the meanings of words, the meanings of landscape elements (water, for example) are only potential until context shapes them. Rules of grammar govern and guide how landscapes are formed, some specific to places and their local dialects, others universal. Landscape is pragmatic, poetic,

rhetorical, polemic. Landscape is a scene of life, cultivated construction, carrier of meaning. It is language (1998, p.15).

Navigating the site and coming to know it was crucial in order to read it and understand it. Being present on the property and physically moving within the landscape, it became inevitable that I was generating stories, memories and images of significance. Physical changes in some areas of the property, and the stasis of others, could be documented and revisited creating a dialogue that extended off-site and into the studio. On-site, by walking, sitting and absorbing the language of the land, I was conversing and discovering ways to respond to the space around me, and in turn allowing time for a response to come back. Interaction with the site as a conversation thus required duration, presence and repeated visits to the site.

Visitation became the primary frame for my relationship with the site. Visitation provided the space for subjectivity, and the understanding that a 'visitor's experience of the same place may invoke reactions and associations entirely differently from that of the inhabitants' (Tuan in Pearson 2010, p.24). Pearson expands on this characterisation of visitation to consider its relationship with access. Within his categorisation of artist and audience encounters with sites, visitation requires that 'I go there and you and they do not' (Pearson 2010, p.19). It thus implies the position of artist as mediator of the site for an external audience. Visitation is described more generally as 'an action of going to a place, either for some special purpose or merely in order to see it' (OED 2014) which suggests that seeing (it) is an act of desire to *go there* first and foremost but also to react, respond or at least formulate a judgement at a subjective level. The subsequent descriptive outcome can be interlaced with communication through text, image or oral outputs that establish other access points in the realm of association as opposed to direct connectivity – learning of/going to/being on the land. This therefore created an adjacent space for texts/observations/imaginings/fictions to emerge and feed into the multiple facets of site engagement and modes of representation associated with the essence of place.

At the same time as I was generating replies to the site, the landscape was re-written by natural and human interventions. Solitary eucalypts (paddock trees) in certain areas of the property provided shelter and habitat one week and were removed the next, leaving only traces of their existence. Over a relatively short

period of time, photographs that I had taken as visual references became among the last images of a place as it was, never to be again. The map of Jill's kitchen table had become obsolete within just a few months. The document was only relevant at one point in time and provided unreliable information. Visitation, experience and existing in the space were the only ways to understand the shifting texts of the landscape as it occurred.

Approaching the land as a text and using text as a descriptive device, I was producing work that in itself seemed open-ended and responsive to/of/on the site in a broadening context, rather than a resolved and definitive representation. The resulting exhibition component of my practice-led research is the result of a process of refining of ideas, the sifting of multiple engagements with *Oakdene* and arriving at representative matter. These are secondary objects for the viewer in a reversed hierarchy, where as for me, the maker, walking and sensing were the primary undertakings and outcomes. My work on the property, as described in this paper, was conducted through the act of walking, observing, documenting, interacting and making. Going, seeing, and being allowed me to identify points of interest and to be influenced by certain characteristics of the site under changeable circumstances in an ongoing dialogue.

In this exegesis I detail my approach to art making within a landscape framework, exploring change and the fluid nature of the Midlands to explain my practice and methodologies. I discuss how I at times use text to frame an experience, a subjective truth and a way of sharing moments and at other times use text in an abstracted form through sculptural means. This exegesis also documents and reflects on on-site sculptural, performative and recording works that I experimented with using various media as a way of navigating ideas of reading and writing landscape in response to increasingly complex ideas and approaches. I consider the problems and processes involved in the re-telling of on-site experiences as off-site fragmented works united by a single site context.

I also identify points within the project that became an unravelling of the initial discourse. These in turn raised questions about maker and audience, on-site and off-site, idea and object as well as processes of mapping and communicating site as described by Karen O'Rourke when she writes that '[a]rt involves both audience and artist engaging in "the intimate union of doing and

undergoing” that makes an experience what it is’ (2013, p.38). My project seeks to locate the intersection of where that might be so that within the context of the overall landscape text, everyone is able to read between the lines.

Walking

In a garden, as in a forest, each detail has its place within the whole, all linked by deliberate impulse, by idea. (Whiston-Spirn 1998, p.137)

The location for this project was the property of *Oakdene* – a 1620ha (4000 acre) farm in the Northern Midlands 30 minutes drive south of the city of Launceston on the Midland Highway. The land extends east from the serpentine South Esk River, is intersected by the highway and then continues west to the adjoining property on a relatively flat patch of ground in the Midland basin (Fig.1).



Figure 1: Patrick Sutczak, *Google Satellite Image detailing Oakdene's boundary*, sourced and digitally drawn 2013.

Just outside the township of Perth, travellers on the Midland Highway are first introduced to the Midlands as scores of properties network continuously for around 175 kilometers south to the outskirts of Brighton, the last major township before the Tasmanian capital city of Hobart. The Northern Midland area in large stretches far beyond the view of the main highway stretching east toward the Deddington Valley, Fingal, and toward Cressy and Poatina in the west and further south toward Campbell Town and eventually Ross before

crossing over at 42 degrees south from the equator - a line that has historically divided Tasmania into the divisions of North and South.

Oakdene was identified as an ideal site for this project due to its diversity of use and features. The property has a variety of distinctive landscape types including riparian land along the river in the east, highly cultivated soils for the production and harvest of crops, grazing paddocks for sheep and at times dairy cattle, as well as large areas of remnant forest. Within the property I found a 'typical' Midland landscape with a common aesthetic for the basis of my project.

Jamie Kirkpatrick describes misconceptions of the Midlands when he writes '[f]latness, dead and dying eucalypts, gorse, brown pastures, salt – environmental devastation [...] – these are the common impression of those who first travel between Spring Hill and Launceston on the Midland Highway' (2003, p.45). Kirkpatrick goes on however to relay *his* impression, an impression supported by access and time as well as an understanding of the geological, botanical, indigenous and cultural significance of the area itself:

[t]he flatness filled with fog while snow sits on the sun-drenched tiers and white cockatoos scream in the morning, salt pans surrounded by red native grassland, the view of Ben Lomond through sparsely wooded hills while standing by a meandering stream in a valley where colonial plough lines can be seen beneath a species rich native sward, the view from Stacks Bluff on Ben Lomond, seeing the forest open into woodland, and then grassland, on the plains below. Forester kangaroo and eastern quolls in daylight profusion in a hidden valley, the excitement of finding rare herbs, shrubs and orchids in the rough of a golf course, the despair of ongoing bush remnants. The natural paradise that was the Midlands in 1800 hides now largely in its recesses, but it is still there, and deserves both celebration and a future (2003, p.45).

Kirkpatrick's intimate description offers both an enticement and a warning. The Midlands and its agricultural development since European settlement hides unique intimate landscape experiences to be discovered yet is

contrasted by the very nature of private ownership and independent agricultural practices – the greater landscape has, and will again, change. John Fraser Hart writes that '[t]he rural landscape is constantly changing. It is always in a state of becoming' (1988, p.381) and this is no more evident than through observations on any single working property. Furthermore, Hart notes that the land is 'shaped by a host of individual decisions, some great and transformational, most small and incremental in and of themselves' (1988, p381-382) and it is only through repeat engagement and widespread access that these decisions can be witnessed, and understood as having an *effect* over time. Agriculture by its very definition is to cultivate the wild lands and to make use of the ground beneath our feet, essentially creating the division between the wild and untamed from the domesticated and useful. Dean notes that '[i]t has been through a series of processes, some natural and some of our doing, that the Midlands exists as it is today' (Dean 2003, p.2). This is commodified and contested land.

The Midlands, for all its visibility, is not traditionally sought after as a destination for hiking on, or through. The hectares of land are of use, and *in* use, and without discernible attractions most often associated with hiking (not lessening the value of aesthetic impact itself) the pursuit for access is uncommon. As a landscape in which to locate my arts research, the gravitation toward the Midlands was not only for the aesthetic qualities, but for the exploratory opportunities to be present in an environment so often seen but rarely accessed. I wanted to discover the intricacies, histories and traces of human and non-human interactions within a specific agricultural setting.

Central to my practice was to walk the property. I approached *Oakdene* without a specific agenda in regards to where I was going, how long it would take to get there, what I would see and what I would do. It was important for me to let the landscape reveal itself with each and every step by adopting Ben Jacks' philosophy that '[t]he bodily experience of walking and the pace of engagement with the world opens the space to recognize its beauty and distress' (2004, p.9). By allowing my thinking to be manipulated by what presented itself to me, initial repeat visits to the property were rooted firmly in wandering and documenting in order to read the agricultural landscape in a personally responsive rather than objectively analytical way.

An open approach to the act of walking in order to discover the catalysts for making was essential for being able to read the landscape as a text - to tease out the narratives presented by place to which a creative response would emerge. This was the process that began with an idea derived from O'Rourke's observation that 'walking protocols' in contemporary art practice can differ from the established rules of a scientific approach to guidelines and experimentation (2013, p.47) in that an 'artistic protocol may deliberately leave room for interpretation, thus making it possible for a work to be executed in more than one way' (2013, pp.47-48). Without knowing how the act, and art, of walking would render itself into a series of on and off-site works, I began a conversation between myself as walker/maker, and the land as site/text.

I used walking as a methodology because 'walking functions as the engine of immersion' (Conway 1998, p.52) allowing for exposure to nuanced information during ambulation on *Oakdene*. Those nuances ranged from human interventions and natural occurrences that shaped the property through traces identified over time from endemic fauna and working animals, to my very presence and movements across the landscape (Fig.2). With the property divided by numerous fences to keep sheep and cattle in, and wild animals out, I recognised the interplay between human and non-human was another source of tension and change within the landscape. Choosing not to focus specifically on the animals, I became interested in segregation and shifts in boundaries. From that came a series of eclectic experiments where I began to identify with the complexities of the property itself along with my approach to making.

My project sought to reach the point of necessary collapse between on-site/off-site experience and representation because through 'modes of visual representation (of site) [...] one cannot feel and therefore cannot truly understand' (Tilley, Hamilton & Bender 2000, p.42) the experience of place as I was. Walking became the primary artistic act with the activation of all my senses – ephemeral performances of duration and action, undertaken only by myself. The works and the process of making works off-site became fragments of experience – a subjective map indeed leaving space for, as O'Rourke states, 'interpretation' (2013 p.48).



Figure 2: Patrick Sutczak, *West Walk*, 2013, digital video still.

The initial process of walking over a period of two weeks early in the project enabled me to construct a sense of familiarity and to identify things, and more importantly locate my *self* in relation to those things. As I moved across the fields, crossing through the wire fences, climbing over gates, or finding squeezable gaps between fence stays, I formed a mental map whereby I could position myself within the property. A rusty water-trough, a small dam, a fallen tree, a concrete foundation where a shed no longer stood - all these differing objects aided in a primitive form of navigation, and one where walking became both 'sighting' and 'measuring' as categorised by Jacks in *Reimagining Walking: Four Practices* (2004, p.5-9).

By walking the land and making rudimentary visual connections of things and the spaces between them I began 'seeking location and experiencing dislocation, bringing order to chaos, exploring ratios of scale, charting new terrains' (Harmon 2009, p.10) while reading the site and generating knowledge. Mental mapping of the site was not dissimilar from skills associated with orienteering and being able to locate one's self in a particular place. Stephen S. Hall writes:

Orientating begins with geography, but it reflects a need of the conscious, self-aware organism for a kind of transcendent orientation that asks not just where I am, but where do I fit in this landscape? (2004, p.15)

And fitting in to the land was an important question to address in my project because of the nature of my wanderings – why walk to, and stop, in the centre of an open field? (Fig.3) The fields have a purpose to them that doesn't lend itself to durational visitation. Orienteering requires quick assessments of terrain at speed using a relevant map and compass in order to cross over the landscape, locate control points and get to the finish some distance away (IOF, 2015). A field would be considered a geographical obstacle in that sense – a space that would take time to move through. However, my interest was in slowing down in an attempt to remove a variety of possible contexts for engaging with the space and assign a new meaning for *being* there.



Figure 3: Patrick Sutczak, *Across the fields*, 2013, digital photographs.

The more I walked, the more *Oakdene* became a space for contemplative thought that informed works detailed further in this exegesis. Laurene Vaughan writes that '[t]o meander in the external space is to take respite from the other activities of life and to have space and time to focus on the work of

creation and creating' (2009, p. 318). While I found this to be true, I also found the walks to be problematic as Vaughan also identifies when she further writes:

[t]here are those (such as the Surrealists, Dadaists and Situationist International) who perceive the actual engagement with space by walking [...] to be an act of creating itself. [...] This act of creation (like dance or other performances) was temporal and contextual, and existed while being enacted (2009, p.318)

The problematic aspect was I found that statement also to be true. Walking quickly became a performance of which I was wholly invested, yet which played to an audience of no one. Recording the walks became necessary as documentation of the act. As I negotiated the project, the question of 'what was the work?' arose. I frequently photographed and filmed myself moving across the property (Fig.4) and dual approaches to my work emerged. On-site and off-site became entangled as some walks were conducted and completed as creations themselves. The images and footage became a database of which to draw upon – a resource of my ephemeral activities for the gallery space.



Figure 4: Patrick Sutzak, *Walking/Filming*, 2013, digital video still.

As discussed in the following chapters, walking, documenting and mapping became almost inseparable aspects to my project, all of which informed the

need for hybrid approaches to considering *Oakdene* as a text. Considering walking artist Hamish Fulton's philosophy that a 'walk has a life of its own and does not need to be materialised into an artwork' (2014), the project presented a number of challenges in order to bridge experiences with object creation and landscape representation.

Navigation

Have I found myself? After the last five days, I'm not only wondering where I am, but who I am. I'm here, but where is here? (Drifting Jimmy in Sheffer R, 2004, p.67)

Gone was the roadside perspective of wire fences converging in the distance to a horizon-point. This perspective of public scenery – where the viewer can look in and is yet denied access – had been superseded by presence and intimacy. Each plot boundary now became a destination that signified a threshold to the next space. Time became a reasonably accurate measure of distance when walking across grazing pasture due to the unimpeded route ahead, with minutes denoting kilometers. Unlike a trail-walk situation, or the block system of a city with its frequent unpredictability in navigation (not by design, but due to the human/non-human elements that frequent it), the *Oakdene* landscape was reasonably void of distractions and lent itself to providing not only physical space, but also a psychological space for contemplative thought.

Oakdene has boundaries not destinations and, as a result, my early experiences of familiarising myself with the property were as much about stopping as they were about moving forward. *Oakdene* is rich with a microcosm of detail, and initial investigations on the project were focused on identifying myself in relation to those details and attempting to map them through creative and contemplative experiments. With a recreational interest in trail-walking and experience of Tasmania's natural features, the thought of being able to move freely across the land was strangely foreign and problematic. On the walking trail, there is typically a path to follow to reach a destination. If a constructed track isn't present, a series of waypoints are discernible that indicate the way to progress along a predetermined path. Walking around the property of *Oakdene*, I found myself establishing my own micro destination points, perhaps out of a long history of feeling as though I needed to get *somewhere* when walking through incremental means. It took a number of visits to become accustomed to path-*lessness* that served to highlight autonomy in exploring the site.

The sense of being in the Midlands landscape suffuses Phillip Wolfhagen's paintings. Relating to physical presence as a mode of understanding place, Hansen writes:

[f]or Wolfhagen [...] conquest is ambiguous, reciprocal. Looking across the gold-dry, irrigation dry Tasmanian Midlands, looking up at the crisp, blue-grey pleats of the Western Tiers, walking and fishing in the wet white clouds up the Ouse and around the Lakes, digging in the productive vegetable garden at home (his half-spoken answer to Monet's Giverny), the artist is as much in as on (Hansen 2000).

With *View to the Past* (Fig.5) there is an abstracted familiarity in the dry fields stretching out toward the distant mountain ranges under a large sky. In an image taken from *Oakdene* looking east (Fig.6), I find a relatable aesthetic to what is depicted in *View to the Past*. What is notable in both scenes is the sense of scale, vast stretches of land absent of visible boundaries, - the grid system of fences denoting segregation and ownership. Wolfhagen is quoted in Reid as saying '[the Midlands] is not a benign landscape' (2014)' and this personal opinion is drawn from intimate and *lived* experience of the area. Paintings such as *Night Vision III* (Sherman Galleries, 2006) and *Night Vision VI* (Glover Prize, 2007) portray settlement and infrastructure – a modern inevitability. *Night Vision III*, with an unromanticised landscape that includes power poles and wires as dominating features, remind us that 'the middle ground is firmly sandwiched between two unmistakable signs of human presence' (Reid, 2011), one of which is also dominant in *Night Vision VI*, where the glow of electric lights at dusk reveals habitation, practicality and comfort in the distance of the Midland-*esque* landscape. The gridded infrastructure of human habitation is stretched across the land, and pushes its way into representation, but is not the complete story of this landscape.



Figure 5: Philip Wolfhagen, *View to the Past*, 2011, oil and beeswax on linene, 214.5cm x 200.5cm.



Figure 6: Patrick Sutczak, *Looking east - site documentation*, 2013, digital photograph.

Walking and navigating the pasture was a completely different experience from navigating through the remnant forest areas of *Oakdene*. The

pastures represent space and openness that seemed to reflect those very things within myself. My thoughts loosened and seemed to amble as much as my feet, eventually influencing early text-based visual experiments. In the remnant areas, navigating a way through the space required more attention and the ground underfoot was more reminiscent of a trail hike along a worn path. While the path was not clearly visible in the remnants, a self-appointed waypoint in the near distance acted as one. The density of the remnant forest meant that navigation was at times erratic, and, in stark contrast to the fields, created a way of engaging with the land in a more analytical and challenging way. I identified with Wylie when he writes that 'the walker in the woods is straightaway, nervously and anxiously, an encompassed self' (2005, p.238) because of the way in which the remnants are comprised of native eucalyptus species towering above a thick and cluttered understory of weed and fern, that became more invasive over time. There was endlessness to the entanglement of trees and understory shrubs.

By pausing for visual assessment and decision-making, I became aware of the difficulty of simply moving forward, thus generating a degree of anxiousness. To stop (in the woods), as Wylie further points out, 'is to be hemmed in' (ibid.). While feelings of being engulfed by the surrounds had the potential to descend into a need for retreat, my responses were much more aligned with a desire to experience those challenges. Frustrations brought about by back-tracking and re-routing my path, became experiences directly associated with walking, navigating and making ground in that place, at that time.

I welcomed these frustrations with one work in particular early in the project as part of my *Hopeless Remnantic* (2013) exhibition. Titled *Everything Is Easy From Space* (Fig.7), the work featured a short text overlaid upon an image of remnant forest thick with waist-high bracken fern that I had clumsily walked through. The title was suggestive of the pre-walk planning I had done to reach a location on *Oakdene* identified on Google Satellite imagery (2013). The reality of being physically immersed at a human scale in any particular place is obviously vastly different from a topographical map, no matter how accurate in terms of imagery.

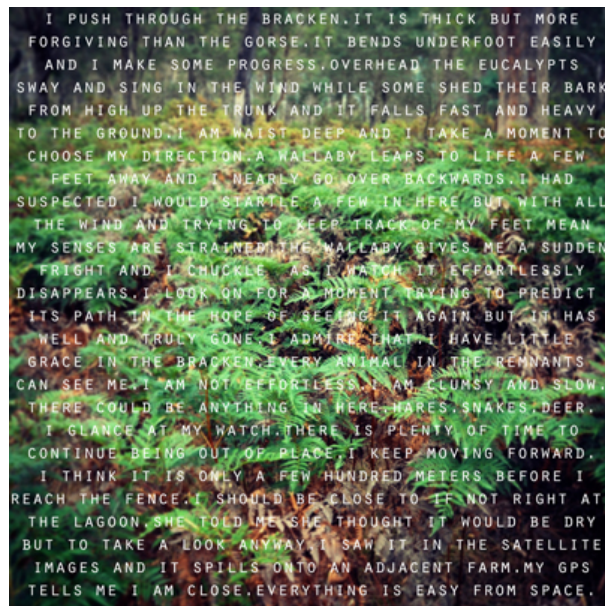


Figure 7: Patrick Sutczak, *Everything is Easy from Space*, 2013, text, digital photograph

Wading through the thick bracken and feeling genuine concerns about the possibility of being confronted by a venomous snake were enough to experience being uncomfortable and subsequently, cautious. *Hopeless Remnantic* on the whole was about honest responses to *Oakdene* and superimposing those thoughts through text onto images of the locations in which they occurred. Through the coupling of image and narrative, I wanted the viewer to not only see where I was, but to read something that was an alternative to describing what I saw. These experiments were making visible the 'density of experience' (Pearson 2010, p.20) in order to relay a sense of place that could constitute what that *place* might be like for the unfamiliar in a hybrid of text and image.

Using photography as part of *Hopeless Remnantic*, it was possible to compose an accurate account of the things that were present in the snapshot composition at the time I was there. Susan Sontag described nature photography as the 'ecology safari' (1973, p.11) stating that natural environments are mortal, and subsequently hunted because these locations are prized - an observation even more applicable when applied to the context of Midland forest remnant ecology. She writes:

[t]o take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt (ibid).

The need to record, to provide or perhaps validate the existence *of*, with the experience *of*, became a large part of my relationship with *Oakdene* and the variable landscapes of pasture and remnant forest within.

Particularly through the months from March in 2013 to November 2013, the walks that I was undertaking were crossing seasons and changes on the property were becoming more evident. On a typical walk of around five to six hours, I was able to traverse the paddocks in isolation and observe the changes created naturally and by human intervention in my absence.

Through photography, I could accurately portray the transition of a cultivated paddock awaiting seed to a field of canola blanketed in vibrant green and yellow a month later. Over the period of the project, specific areas of the property (particularly areas of pasture) were changed dramatically to accommodate infrastructure for irrigation, resulting in a mass removal of paddock trees and redefining paddock boundaries. My photographs became documents of visual fact – before and after.

Documenting the walks and assembling a catalogue of images relating to site became important as an evocation of experience after the fact – a memory of a unique Tasmanian landscape that exists as it is at the discretion of the agricultural landowner.

The Midlands ecology has been subject to a series of changes in human habitation and intervention. As a result of settlement, the early decades of the 1800s saw the new Tasmanian farmers changing not only the ecology of the Midlands, but its appearance as well. Historical research into pre-European vegetation in the Midlands area suggest that the aesthetic openness of the landscape is something that was endemic, a mosaic of woodlands, grasslands and wetlands, maintained by traditional burning regimes of its Aboriginal custodians. The open landscape enabled the rapid establishment of sheep grazing estates on native

pastures – a form of farming that left the native ecosystems relatively intact (Bush Heritage Australia, 2014)’.

This description is supported by colonial artist John Glover when he described areas of the Midlands landscape as being ‘possible almost everywhere to drive a carriage as easily as in a gentleman’s park in England’ (Smith 1960 in Fensham 1989, p. 37). However, the introduction of European flora and fauna, together with new systems of ownership, and land use caused impacts of the ecology that continue to reverberate.

Glover’s depictions of the Midlands through his painting reveal how the appearance of the landscape, its use and its control were deeply entwined. Smith (in Fensham, 1989) describes Glover’s later work depicting his *Patterdale* property in the Northern Midlands as ‘less picturesque’ and that his paintings ‘relied more upon a clear perception of the characteristic features of the Australian scene’ (p.43). The ‘grassy plains’ and ‘gnarled trunks of ancient gumtrees’ identified by Gilfedder (2003, p.61) as characteristic of the Midlands can be seen in *Patterdale landscape with cattle* (1833) (Fig.8) in harmony with the addition of livestock.



Figure 8: John Glover, *Patterdale landscape with cattle*, 1833, oil on canvas, 76.8cm x 114.6cm.

While truthful as a representation of the Midlands flora, *Patterdale landscape with cattle* also documents the beginning of the region as it is recognised today – a landscape of cultivation, order and ownership. Beyond the deadfall and standing eucalypts, a building sits quietly and distantly in the composition, smoke from the chimney discreetly carried away by the seasonal breeze – a subtle yet assured reminder that there is an overseer to this scene. The scene here is one of pastoral contentment, where indigenous habitation can be evoked at the safe distance of nostalgia.

In Tasmania, the forceful eviction of indigenous tradition by Eurocentric principles of ownership, and indeed, inheritance, has seen irreplaceable knowledge of Midland management and resourcefulness lost. Being on the property of *Oakdene* caused me to consider indigenous heritage as a point of focus – a search for traces of an evicted culture stretching back across millennia. With such rapid change being evident over the past few hundred years in a post-colonised Tasmania, as an artist and researcher on this project, I felt I was contemplating a direction that would only be problematic with fact-finding and that my interpretations would be fiction and speculation. My focus on a specific period of engagement with the property as it currently stands made me attentive to the rapid pace of change on site as both human and non-human processes altered the environment.

Because of these changes, I used photography as a device for recollection above all else. While walking and navigating, the camera became a basic tool for documenting with composition being a lesser concern than accessing the data from the image and collating that with GPS data from the specific walk. Changes observed in the landscape could be located, and mapped. This would be the foundation for synthesising post-experience walking with studio art-making and experimentation. With my work featuring photographs, but not being bound by them, my processes allowed me to break away from the restraints of composition and technical competency, and explore the forms an image could take in order to be indicative of the site at different locations.

As a way of recording my navigation, I carried and activated a handheld GPS device at the beginning and conclusion of each walk. The data

gathered from the GPS allowed me to review the walk visually by way of a trail overlay on existing satellite image of the property and surrounds, or in a numerical way through time-based recordings of latitude and longitude, as well as elevation and walking speed (Fig.9). The information is a record that can be read as a true account of the property - how it is negotiated physically. The record of my passage is varying, and speed data alone could be read as an indication that the terrain is difficult to traverse. The line trail overlay serves to further validate that possibility, especially if the line is erratic.

Summary

Notes

Name:

Current Track: 03 APR 2013 10:00 001

In...	Time	Leg Distance	Leg Time	Leg Speed	Elevation	Leg Course	Position
1	3/04/13 10:00 AM	6 m	0:00:27	0.8 km/h	184 m	308° true	S41 38.790 E147 13.768
2	3/04/13 10:00 AM	1 m	0:00:28	0.2 km/h	182 m	47° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.764
3	3/04/13 10:01 AM	1 m	0:00:10	0.4 km/h	181 m	350° true	S41 38.787 E147 13.765
4	3/04/13 10:01 AM	2 m	0:00:11	0.7 km/h	183 m	34° true	S41 38.787 E147 13.765
5	3/04/13 10:01 AM	2 m	0:00:09	0.9 km/h	183 m	105° true	S41 38.786 E147 13.766
6	3/04/13 10:01 AM	2 m	0:00:30	0.3 km/h	184 m	170° true	S41 38.786 E147 13.767
7	3/04/13 10:02 AM	1 m	0:00:14	0.2 km/h	185 m	216° true	S41 38.787 E147 13.768
8	3/04/13 10:02 AM	1 m	0:00:28	0.1 km/h	183 m	191° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.767
9	3/04/13 10:02 AM	2 m	0:00:33	0.2 km/h	184 m	59° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.767
10	3/04/13 10:03 AM	3 m	0:00:18	0.5 km/h	183 m	235° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.768
11	3/04/13 10:03 AM	1 m	0:00:10	0.4 km/h	183 m	64° true	S41 38.789 E147 13.767
12	3/04/13 10:04 AM	2 m	0:00:15	0.4 km/h	184 m	338° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.768
13	3/04/13 10:04 AM	1 m	0:00:09	0.4 km/h	183 m	151° true	S41 38.787 E147 13.767
14	3/04/13 10:04 AM	5 m	0:00:04	4.4 km/h	183 m	158° true	S41 38.788 E147 13.767
15	3/04/13 10:04 AM	24 m	0:00:17	5 km/h	183 m	156° true	S41 38.790 E147 13.769
16	3/04/13 10:04 AM	22 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	182 m	149° true	S41 38.802 E147 13.776
17	3/04/13 10:05 AM	23 m	0:00:17	5 km/h	182 m	155° true	S41 38.812 E147 13.784
18	3/04/13 10:05 AM	21 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	183 m	156° true	S41 38.824 E147 13.791
19	3/04/13 10:05 AM	23 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	183 m	153° true	S41 38.834 E147 13.797
20	3/04/13 10:05 AM	20 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	182 m	143° true	S41 38.845 E147 13.805
21	3/04/13 10:06 AM	21 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	182 m	145° true	S41 38.853 E147 13.814
22	3/04/13 10:06 AM	22 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	182 m	153° true	S41 38.863 E147 13.822
23	3/04/13 10:06 AM	22 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	183 m	143° true	S41 38.873 E147 13.830
24	3/04/13 10:06 AM	22 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	183 m	145° true	S41 38.883 E147 13.839
25	3/04/13 10:07 AM	22 m	0:00:16	5 km/h	183 m	156° true	S41 38.893 E147 13.848
26	3/04/13 10:07 AM	17 m	0:00:13	5 km/h	184 m	162° true	S41 38.903 E147 13.854
27	3/04/13 10:07 AM	22 m	0:00:17	5 km/h	184 m	160° true	S41 38.912 E147 13.858
28	3/04/13 10:07 AM	19 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	184 m	162° true	S41 38.924 E147 13.864
29	3/04/13 10:08 AM	20 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	185 m	161° true	S41 38.933 E147 13.868
30	3/04/13 10:08 AM	18 m	0:00:14	5 km/h	185 m	154° true	S41 38.944 E147 13.873
31	3/04/13 10:08 AM	5 m	0:00:04	4.3 km/h	185 m	149° true	S41 38.952 E147 13.879
32	3/04/13 10:08 AM	8 m	0:00:14	2.1 km/h	186 m	156° true	S41 38.955 E147 13.880
33	3/04/13 10:08 AM	1 m	0:00:06	0.6 km/h	186 m	172° true	S41 38.959 E147 13.883
34	3/04/13 10:09 AM	5 m	0:00:04	5 km/h	186 m	144° true	S41 38.959 E147 13.883
35	3/04/13 10:09 AM	23 m	0:00:17	5 km/h	186 m	154° true	S41 38.962 E147 13.885
36	3/04/13 10:09 AM	21 m	0:00:15	5 km/h	186 m	151° true	S41 38.973 E147 13.892
37	3/04/13 10:09 AM	18 m	0:00:13	5 km/h	186 m	153° true	S41 38.982 E147 13.900
38	3/04/13 10:09 AM	6 m	0:00:15	1.4 km/h	186 m	163° true	S41 38.991 E147 13.906
39	3/04/13 10:10 AM	9 m	0:00:13	2.4 km/h	188 m	150° true	S41 38.994 E147 13.907
40	3/04/13 10:10 AM	10 m	0:00:21	1.7 km/h	188 m	172° true	S41 38.998 E147 13.910
41	3/04/13 10:10 AM	6 m	0:00:16	1.3 km/h	190 m	173° true	S41 39.003 E147 13.911

Points	Distance	Area	Elapsed Time	Avg. Speed	Ascent	Descent	Avg. Grade
988	8.8 km	0.4 sq km	4:01:08	2.2 km/h	154 m	156 m	-0.0 %

Color:

Green

 Center on Selected

Figure 9: Patrick Sutczak, *Garmin Information*, 2013, captured computer image

Coupled with photograph data (date and time), I could accurately align the image within reasonable proximity to any point chosen on the GPS line overlay. This led to examining my practice in relation to walking, recollection, emotional, and artistic response. From that examination, I

generated an important question. Was a line on a screen an accurate representation of place and experience? Without a visual context such as satellite imagery of the property or photographs, it was difficult to convince myself that it was. The line, though embedded with the physical undertaking and the history of obtaining it, was still a line that could be transposed to other locations, and potentially hold other meanings

Hamish Fulton's use of text negotiates the relationship between experience and abstracted representation. In the 2012 retrospective at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, Fulton presented a series of vinyl text works 'each with a strong sense of place' (Ikon Gallery 2012). With a minimalistic approach (Fig.10), Fulton displayed the outcomes of certain walks by way of relaying that he undertook the journey and that *that* was the work. The record, or the creative documentation, is the secondary outcome of his experiences (Tate 2014). Reminiscent of Person's model of visitation relating to site-specific performance and ideas relating to occupancy, Fulton's work falls within '[t]hey go there, you and I do not' (Pearson 2010, p.24) leaving a map for individual experience and a space for new encounters.



Figure 10: Hamish Fulton, title unknown from *Walking in Relation to Everything* exhibition, 2012, vinyl painting. Photograph by Stuart Whipps, Ikon Gallery.

While the texts may appear to be a slim outcome of such a long walk, Fulton's practice of 'walking as art' makes the walks 'analogous to anchors securing larger buoys of thought' (Tate Modern 2014) and that the environments that Fulton chooses to locate himself in, or move through, essentially becomes his primary studio of contemplation.

Similarly, I found that space, solitude and walking opened the land up to plentiful opportunities for experiences and potential modes of representing my movements across the land. In many ways, the lines that I began working with on early experiments were accurate in a cartographical sense, but were in need of an accompanying narrative or image to give the line a context to locate it geographically and to create an abstracted map. I began to see myself as a cartographer of my own thoughts relating to time at the site. I felt a sense that introspection was being heightened by space and relative silence and that this was informing my early texts:

Acres and acres of open paddocks yet I move toward the edge. The posts are thin and the wire thinner. Dead straight lines dissecting the land creating a sense of division and order. There are no animals to observe here today but the path is well worn and I fall into line. I kick up small dust clouds from the dry exposed earth. Compacted and tough the grasses on the fringe that have barely taken root on the path appear fragile and temporary in the heat of the late morning sun. I run my fingers along the wire as I go. Smooth and warm I think to myself as I tap upon it and a barely audible ping terminates at the next post along. These are open paddocks now. Neatly kept from grazing I suppose and I wonder what happens next. I am alone and the sound of my boots upon the ground is a strangely pleasing one. It is the sound of progress towards a destination unknown. There are little limitations here but for the fences. I am able to cross them easily and so I stop and look around. I can go anywhere from here. I have been walking for an hour and the sun is getting warmer. To the south I can see the matted canopy of another remnant forest and I think about heading in that direction. I think about it but follow the line some more. I have a song in my

head and as I try to shake it another one appears. They fuse and make no sense.

- *Follow the Line* text from *Hopeless Remnantic*, 2013

The text alludes to conditions (heat/morning/dry) and also offers description of objects interacted with (fences/wire) yet leaves out crucial specifics for the reader to be able to locate themselves, leaving only scope for imagination. Without the mention of acres of paddocks however, the text is problematic on its own. Photography was used in conjunction with the text to apply a context and provide an association for a viewer with the site. With text and image combined I attempted to overcome the limitations of one or the other and find ways to create works more immersive and subjective, than factually descriptive.

Nonetheless, the representation of the property remained fragmented and 'without some plot to organize the flow of events, everything becomes much harder – even impossible – to understand (Cronon, 1992, p.1351). The only thing connecting the use of text is the site itself. As with *Everything is Easy from Space*, the sixteen texts in *Hopeless Remnantic* are linear individually, but not overall. Through the use of text I noted Cronon's observations that 'when we describe human activities within an ecosystem, we seem always to tell stories about them' (1991, p.1349) yet also remain aware that by using a narrative, however minimal, I was embellishing the site. A source of influence on my project was a publication created directly from a Midlands Landcare association that spliced historical and factual information of the Tasmanian Midland flora and fauna with oral histories of landowners who imprinted themselves onto the Midland fabric. Roger Lockett describes riding his bike in the region as a child and describing his affection and sadness of change.

There were certain little areas [...] where you could sit under a specific tree and have your cut sandwich [...]. Then later on you call on those memories and think "I remember sitting there under a tree" and then all of a sudden it goes and you think "Goodness gracious me, what are the stories that tree could tell, and now it's gone, I didn't do anything to save it". [...] The stories are lost along with the trees (2003, p.32)

The place became fascinating to me for its space that then, in turn, informed my creative representational decisions.

I became entangled in the site itself and how I was beginning to portray it. Kenneth R Olwig argues that representation of a place through a landscape painting is less about nature and scenery, and more about culture (2008, p.162) and a document of social activity and history making. He further states:

[l]andscape painters or poets who make a prospect of a land or country the subject for an artwork or poem are seeking to do more than just reproduce what is before their eyes. They try to capture the more abstract state, quality or “shape” of the place [...] because this is what makes them artists practicing the art of place making, rather than surveyors or cartographers (2008, p.163).

Having been exposed to the scenic values of the Midlands for most of my life from the Midland Highway, the allure of becoming intimate through walking and experiencing the landscape was an opportunity to capture the ‘shape’ of the place as Olwig describes. Where as a map in the cartographical sense is designed to be a topographical and directional tool (such as a road map) ‘maps intrigue us, perhaps none more than those that ignore mapping conventions’ (Harmon, 2004, p10). This then allows my interpretation of a place to be of value artistically and culturally. I wanted to experiment with not what the property was, but what the property could do as I moved across it.

The scenically public yet undeniably private nature of the Tasmanian Midlands means that beyond agricultural purposes, a study of the land’s ‘usefulness’ culturally through public visitation and activity remains largely unexplored. The use of text in my work that runs the risk of ‘being misunderstood’ (Cronon W, 1991, p.1351) must be approached in the same way as I approached *Oakdene* itself – through a combination of

unknown destinations and micro-interactions recorded along the way set within an overall boundary.

Experiments and Mapping

He had brought a large map representing the sea, without the vestige of land: And the crew were much pleased when they found it to be a map they could all understand. (Carrol 1876 in Harmon 2002, p.5)

As with Richard Long's iconic 1967 *A Line Made by Walking* work (Fig.11) I too walked a line in the grass and photographed the outcome of that action (Fig.12) as an experiment in impermanence and text-making. After spending an hour with the work, I moved on satisfied that the intervention was assertive enough to remain for some time yet confident that the traces of my movements would be reversed by the grass itself. Upon return to the same location a week later using GPS and photographic reference, all evidence of my actions were gone.



Figure 11 (left): Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967, photograph and graphite on board, 37.5 x 32.4cm.

Figure 12 (right): Patrick Sutczak, *Line*, 2013, digital photograph.

The autonomy of the land to behave in ways of restoration provided the potential for me to perform interventions through movement knowing that they would be brief conversations and ephemeral works requiring

documentation – an opportunity to author a series of texts that detailed the result of my actions. Like Fulton, Long provides scant details of his walk, or performance. *A Line Made by Walking* for example was presented as a photograph under which Long had handwritten in red graphite pencil A LINE MADE BY WALKING. Below that in grey graphite pencil reads simply ENGLAND 1967 – a fact that assigns a very broad location, and one that also highlights the details as unimportant. What details were provided offered a context, yet Long, while still an art student at the time, was becoming more concerned with finding new ways to work with nature and sculpture through walking and intervention (Burgon 2012).

My line in the grass eventually disappeared, just as Long's had, but at the time I noted down on a piece of paper that I had 'created a line by walking but realised I have been doing that the whole time' (2013). I was referring to the GPS data that was downloaded after each walk and while this was recording my physical path it was only one aspect of the project that I wanted to explore. Those digital lines were permanent but I wanted to continue with interventions and ideas of change, and of identifying and mapping the language of the agricultural landscape.

Using my photograph database as a reference tool, I began isolating themes or points of interest that I hadn't previously sought. Overlaying GPS data, it was clear that certain paths I had walked were intersecting and sometimes being mirrored. I began to identify with frequency and 'desire lines' that I had unintentionally created going from one place to the next over time. I began to discover what was appealing through repeated visitations and how I identified with the land, in terms of negotiating it and returning to things that I would respond to the most. These responses would begin to inform multiple approaches to my mapping of Oakdene. These processes align with the thoughts of Leila Daw when she writes:

Any map tells you more about what the mapmaker (or mapmaker's patron) was thinking than it tells you about the terrain. All maps are either subjective, or so selective that the "given" is kind of not there. The exact same thing goes for landscape art. Mapping and landscape painting are also about attempting to understand the environment, about how to make

things visible that you know, or believe to be there (2008, p.148).

With my work, the things I wanted to make visible was the physical and representational qualities of *being there*. After *Hopeless Remnantic* I turned to the GPS data as a visual tool in order to work with lines and with what I was essentially drawing each and every step. The lines themselves were traces of an ephemeral action – a clue to what ‘I was thinking’ as described by Daw (2008, p.148). Walking, back-tracking, revisiting were all evident in post-walk reviews of the GPS information (Fig.13). As my visits to *Oakdene* increased, so too did the complexity of the lines and the size of my database of information. This information would inform a series of visual investigations around my recorded lines reflecting the idea that ‘to orientate is to hop back and forth between landscape and time, geography and emotion, knowledge and behaviour (Hall 2004, p.15). I started to recognise the multiple possibilities of moving across the land and how these experiences might be realised through studio practice.

Taking on-site information, I began extracting sections to work with and couple that with relevant data such as speed and elevation. I began to see these lines as texts that I could easily read as arteries of movement and flow over the property. This led again to introspection and diverted my experiments away from representation into abstraction.



Figure 13: Patrick Sutczak, *GPS Walk Data* (2013)

Areas of clustered lines were like blockages in the flow, while straight lines became deliberate movements along fences that connected the

experience of ambulation with getting from one area to the next. Like the works of Masaki Fujihata and Esther Polak, I saw my movements as 'representing the physical terrain as a function of the speed at which it is encountered' (Mann, Nolan & Wellman in O'Rourke 2013, p.161) and used GPS as a tool for exploratory approaches to mapping, spatial interactions and interpretation. Similarly, Polak uses GPS in her work to create new kinds of documentaries that 'combine the graphic and narrative possibilities' (O'Rourke 2013, p.164) of tracking human landscapes and traces. For *Amsterdam RealTime* (2002), Polak in collaboration with Jeron Kee and the Waag Society (Fig.14) tracked the movements of 75 volunteers using GPS to create a map that 'has a distinct look and feel of psychogeographic experience: not precise or rational, but expresses the intuitive and personal aspects of geography' (Polak & van Bekkum 2015).

From this I undertook studio experiments that used lines as obscure marks without reference points – digital drawings that existed because of my presence on-site (Fig.15). The lines were additive rather than reductive (Ingold 2007 in Pearson 2010, p.25) in terms of allowing others to see my traces on the property, but I thought of them as co-existing with the circumstances under which they were made. Physically there, I left traces that also functioned in another way with differing temporal aspects. The indentation of my boots in soft soils that would rapidly disappear compared to permanently snapped branches underfoot as a result of my presence. These became intersections of time, object, place – the result of personal and interventionist engagement.

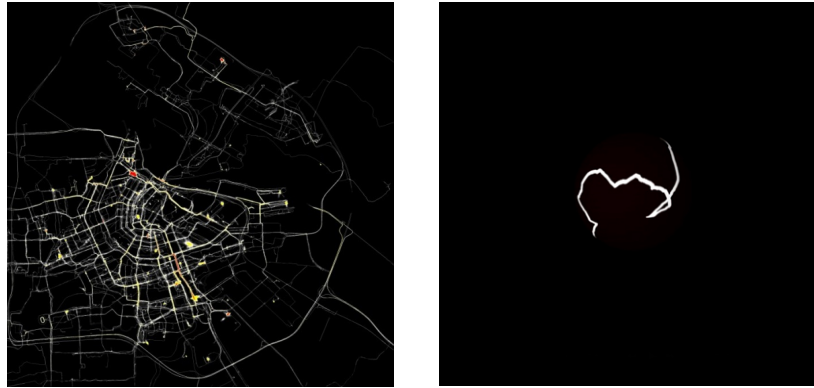


Figure 14 (left): Esther Polak & Jeroen Kee, *Amsterdam RealTime*, 2002, digital image.

Figure 15 (right): Patrick Sutczak, *Line 6*, 2013, digital image.

There was already a distance in my work between primary and secondary objects. In these experiments I began to consider the digital line compositions as unresolved because of the information required to support them as secondary objects based on the primary walks. It was in this space that I thought of '[v]isitation: going and doing' (Pearson 2010, p.18) and in particular describing 'the experience of place and the nature of human occupancy' (Pearson 2010, p.18) with an observation of 'I go there and you and they do not' (Pearson 2010, p.19). The question of representation was leaning toward abstraction that I felt would be misunderstood without context. The lines were deliberately stark against black as a suggestion of importance – the line exists. Its exact shape was unique based on my movements across a landscape that offered almost limitless ways to cross it, yet there was nothing that tied the line to the property present in the image.

Drawing upon Archie Moore's 2012 video work *Kinelexic Tokyo* I took the experiments further to tease out data and expand upon the line. Moore filmed a journey through the vibrant streets of Tokyo, but then altered the work to leave language and text as the only things visible (Davis 2012, p.60). The remaining visual data in the work allowed the viewer to 'glean such information as a sense of location, of history' (Davis 2012, p.60)'.

Inspired by Moore's concepts of visually pairing back, I began experimenting with expanding the work into a video piece.

As a process to create the images, line data from the GPS was applied to a sphere using the 3D imaging software program *Cinema 4D*. I then animated the sphere through a series of rotations causing the line to advance in space. This allowed the viewer to see the line reveal itself slowly as it did with my every step in creating it. As an experiment I negotiated ideas around data visualisation, and numerical elements were added to the video work drawn directly from the GPS CSV export data. Overall, this was presented as having three elements: images, video animation, as well as a recreation of CSV export data on an adjacent wall (Fig.16). Any reference to *Oakdene* as a place was noticeably and deliberately absent, but a necessary investigation (and question) in the limitations (or possibilities) of landscape representation. The work was a trace of physical interaction, as a result of going and doing, again drawing from the theories of Pearson (2010). With the additions, I saw this work as an abstraction and an echo of experience.



Figure 16: Patrick Sutczak, *Line Experiment (DATA)*, installation view, 2013, digital image, digital projection, text

In *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas* (Woods 2013) Denis Woods demonstrated the need for multiple approaches to collecting data and visualising a place. Mapping the neighbourhood of Boylan Heights in

North Carolina, Woods and his team presented a comprehensive representation of experimental mapping – everything from light omitted by street lights, the local paperboy's delivery route, house types, wind chimes, to how many pumpkins were present on porches on Halloween. These standalone visualisations made up the greater narrative of the neighbourhood, one that was subjective and constantly shifting. Blake Butler writes of Woods' work stating that 'the more interesting narratives always come out of letting the smaller pieces intuitively [...] speak for themselves' (2013, p.132) and I began to align with that thinking and adopt a similar approach on the project.

Following on from experimenting with lines and keeping in mind the idea of echoes, changes and shifts emerged as a dominant feature of *Oakdene*, due not only to the expected changes of farming practices but also to the qualities of the flora in the remnant forests. I soon realised that my project was not in any pursuit of achieving a singular point of resolution. Rather, like Woods' re-telling of Boylan Heights, I thought of the property as having a changing text, writing and re-writing itself in ways that were at times obvious, and other times need to be discovered and observed. With further experimentation and exploration of *Oakdene*, entropy surfaced as a way of explaining the tensions between human and nature.

Entropy as I have applied it to this project is the 'tendency for systems to move towards disorder' (Fordham 2015) and I found this an agreeable term against the agricultural backdrop. For the land to be useful for crops or grazing, paddocks need to be worked over time and sculpted for a specific purpose. In the forest remnants of *Oakdene* the human intervention is less visible and therefore creates a new set of ever changing conditions for navigating and experiencing (Figs. 17 & 18).



Figure 17 (left): Patrick Sutczak, *Fields*, 2013, digital photograph.



Figure 18 (right): Patrick Sutczak, *Remnants*, 2013, digital photograph.

I wanted to draw upon these observations and interact with the landscape by creating what became a series of arrangements of branches and deadfall. I named these interventions *Orderings*. The deadfall, known as ‘coarse woody debris’, is a ‘key structural component [...] as a habitat for biodiversity’ (Grove & Meggs 2003 p. 258) and thus an important part of *Oakdene* if it was to retain a balance of the built and the preserved environment. I wanted to explore intervention on a small scale and witness the results over consecutive visits as a way of playing with entropy, interaction, sculpture and movement. Over a number of visits to the property *Orderings* began as simply moving small branches from their place of rest and arranging them in an unlikely position. High and low forms of entropy become apparent with low entropy suggesting that order takes energy. Branches, like leaves, ‘don’t fall into neat piles or stack nicely into towers, they just fall’ (Fordham 2015). The remnant forest floor around me was a mosaic of organic material and my interventions became immediately apparent.

Through a process of ordering and photographing (Fig.19), these experiments were necessary for me to further expand my approach to art making and to isolate the legitimacy of the landscape as text. In that sense, to observe the disorder of the natural forest was to read the area in one way, and to introduce intervention was to read something else into it entirely. The remnant forest was busy by nature, aesthetically and physically. The *Orderings* were a way of moving around in that space of intersection, creating moments of human interaction and establishing a point of difference while allowing for the possibility of an undoing.

Recognising the work of Andy Goldsworthy as a likely point of reference, my *Orderings* were not to create highly considered (largely ephemeral) structures as a creative end, but be open to reversal and in doing so demonstrate tension in the landscape. Where examples of Goldsworthy's work 'replaces the variegated chaos of leaves in the forest [...] with a progression from one colour to another' (Beyst 2002)' I identified with the approach of the 'contrasted as found versus created order' and that 'the new order is not unnatural as such, it is so only in the given context' (Beyst 2002)'. In this case the context was the high entropy of the *Oakdene* remnant forest.



Figure 19: Patrick Sutczak, *Early Orderings*, 2013, digital image.

Upon return to the property a week later, entropy was revealing itself as being a very real force at work, even through my simple experiments (Fig.20). After conducting an act of *Ordering*, interactions had occurred in my absence to alter structure and rewrite the text I had created. The map, again, was something that was in flux – temporal and temporary. By interacting, positioning, documenting and leaving materials to become undone, my interactions reinforced the fact that ‘(r)ock erodes to sand, cemented sand becomes stone, erodes to sand once again’ (Whiston-Spirn 1998, p.99) highlighting the contested space of *Oakdene*, the swiftness of change and the site’s ability to engage in its own rewriting.



Figure 20: Patrick Sutczak, *Early Orderings Undone*, 2013, digital photograph.

At one location on the property near the south-western boundary I happened upon an area on the fringes of a paddock that was littered with small pieces of wood, which appeared to be the remains of the docking up of a tree long since removed. I began to gather and arrange them (Fig.21).



Figure 21: Patrick Sutczak, *Site before Ordering*, 2013, digital photograph.

Again, like the other *Orderings*, I created a series of stacks in the landscape with the intent of returning a week later. The process for gathering and arranging was intimate and took time. The pieces of wood were fixed objects until I arrived at them and initiated intervention with the result being multi-faceted. The GPS line data of my movements were clustered and tight, recording many movements with a fixed period of time contrasting with other data of long lines and distances over kilometers. The objects themselves became small structures that were deliberate and considered in the landscape. Object and action were things that 'become part of hybrid assemblages: concretions, settings and flows' (Thrift 2008 in Pearson 2013, p.119). Though my performance of action and ordering did not have an audience, the result of my actions indicated that something by someone, had taken place at some point - there had been an event (Fig.22).



Figure 22: Patrick Sutczak, *Site after Ordering*, 2013, digital photograph.

Again, in my absence entropy was evident. Stacks had collapsed creating new arrangements less precarious than the order of a tower (Fig.23). These works, though a deviation from earlier experiments, again contributed to the cross-section of possibilities within my project. The dynamism of *Oakdene* promoted new ways of thinking about how the property could be read, how it could be conveyed, and how I would compile experiments and information into a cohesive product.



Figure 23: Patrick Sutczak, *Ordering: before and after*, 2013, digital photograph.

I continued to develop my relationship to the agricultural landscape text in the way that '[r]eaders decode meaning, move from perception of an element to an appreciation of its function, to understanding (Whiston-Spirn 1998, p.168)' and with each visit, my appreciation grew of the complex systems of art and nature. Objects could be the result of actions and movements, but then actions could be objects. As a result photographs and images became the 'tactic for making new connections and relations visible' (Woods 2012, p.36) within the project.

While many site visits during 2013 and 2014 yielded a database of photographs, line data and observations, subtle introductions to the property continued to inspire new directions. Filming my walks from a chest mounted camera provided a tangible view of what I was seeing, and sound recordings captured the presence of banjo frogs in wet areas after rain. Scores of white cockatoos screeching in the skies above were contrasted by the sound of tall grasses buffeted by the winds. I had to keep making, keep visiting and more importantly, keep walking because '[a] walk [...] has nothing to do with point A, B or getting from one to the other' (Horowitz 2013, p.21) rather a walk 'is instead, an investigatory exercise that begins with energy' (Horowitz 2013, p.21). By walking with energy and drifting around the property, my on-site experiences and off-site contemplations led me to thoughts of containment and the archiving of what I felt was a soft archaeology – of uncovering the 'complex and interconnected elements that result in the creation of place' (RMIT Stony Rises Project 2015).

Oakdene was also changing in quite a linear way. Over a short period of months, stands of trees were uprooted, gathered, and burned. Fences were removed, dairy cows were no longer present, a gouge in the land that had started in the east on the banks of the Esk began to encroach steadily toward the west as pipes were laid in anticipation of pivot irrigators. As I continued to photograph the change, it became apparent that I was observing shifting cartographies – boundaries were being re-written on a grand scale by comparison from my first visits in March of 2013. The hybrid map of *Oakdene* that I was creating was fragmenting and the idea of re-telling a landscape as a fixed representation directed new off-site experiments in accumulation and layering.

Archiving and Narratives

And when the mind comes to rest, when it ceases its orientating leaps and shunts and associations, we find ourselves back where we started, where Here intersects Now. (Hall 2004, p.19)

Following on from experiments in line and entropy, a walk on the property early 2014 revealed a faint cluster of white dots in the distance some two kilometers away from where I was. As an example of Tom Stone's philosophies around the drift and physical movements directed by stimuli (Stone 2011, p.1 – 11), I changed course and made a path toward the white dots. As I approached a short while later, it was clear that I was coming upon pallets of bee hives (Fig.24). As I photographed the new introduction in the landscape, I could hear the activity of bees around me, and while keeping some distance, I could see them too – around the boxes, slight in number and no indication of how many bees were actually out in the fields and the remnants. I observed the components of the hives, considered the order not only of the hives themselves, but the way in which they had been delivered. Strapped to the pallets, there was a suggestion of temporary engagement, and easy transport. Fleeting fixtures to serve a transitory purpose in a time and place.



Figure 24: Patrick Sutczak, *Hive Documentation*, 2014, digital photograph.

As I researched beehives, I began to think of archiving as a form of sculpture being derived directly from the components of manufactured beehives. In particular, the components known as Shallow Supers (designed for storing extra honey) and Brood Chambers (living quarters) along with the beeswax frames within (ABJ 2014). With these pieces being compiled to create multistoried factories of activity, I identified with the triangle of insect, human interaction, and product. As objects in the landscape, the hives were immediately recognisable and their purpose and what was contained is a constant association. Having previously seen the work of English artist Alec Finlay at the 18th Biennale of Sydney in 2012, I returned to Finlay's *Swarm (ASX)* (2012) as a point of inspiration. Of *Swarm (ASX)* (Fig.25), Finlay states that:

Swarm (ASX) is an apicultural model of the global financial system. Fluctuations in the stock market reverberate in the 'buzz' of honey-bees broadcast from 10 hives. Each hive bears the acronym of a major world stock exchange. [...] *Swarm (ASX)* is a snapshot of speculative finance translated into the natural ecosystem of bees; dynamic, in flux, undergoing crisis (2015)

Like Finlay and his ongoing work with bees, I related to a found dynamism. Where Finlay found crisis and flux upon the floors of stock exchanges in the likes of New York, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo and Sydney, I wanted my experiments with hives to be a reflection of the shifts, changes and precarious nature of human/non-human relationships upon the agricultural land.



Figure 25: Alec Finlay, *Swarm* (ASX), 2012, installation view

My presence on *Oakdene* and approaches of observation, movement, and documentation had the potential to be explored through a beehive as sculpture/archive. I purchased Shallow Supers, Brood Chambers and frames and began a process of experimentation as objects, and about what form they would take as a work. Each Brood Chamber could hold 8 frames, normally reserved for honeycomb. Pulling apart all the components, I saw them as pieces representative of the whole – and in this case *Oakdene*. The property was a myriad of potentialities and spaces in which to draw inspiration – a multiplicity of points to enter, exit and re-enter. In trying to negotiate readings of my work, resolutions and linear representations, I turned to Woods who wrote:

[...] objectivity does not consist in suppressing an unavoidable subjectivity. It is achieved by acknowledging its intrusion so that the reader is relieved of the necessity of ferreting it out. Besides, nothing obligates a reader to start at the beginning and plow through the complicating actions to the resolution (Woods 2013, p.15)

Woods goes on to further explain the role of the atlas in his mapping work and research, stating that '[a] reader can enter an atlas anywhere, via the

index of the table of contents or [...] letting the atlas fall open where it will' (2013, p19). Visits to the property and subsequent walks over time had certainly demonstrated that each walk would be, and was, unique in both planning and wilful deviation from thoughts about what would be seen, documented, and interacted with. The beehive as an object provided an opportunity to house the results of activity. Careful not to associate the work with bees directly, I wanted to borrow from the structures and imprint ideas about going, doing, recording and storing – all with the idea of layering, unpacking and the intersecting of text, landscape and experience.

With the Shallow Supers and Brood Chambers unresolved, disconnected and set aside within the studio, I created a new series of image/text works that were a return to observational introspection and reflection. Taking cues again from Hamish Fulton, I followed a minimal narrative with a series of new works. Fulton's 1993 series *Ten Toes towards the Rainbow* has been described as 'more romantic and pastoral than much of Fulton's earlier work. Titles such as *Song Path* evoke his observations and emotions during these long, solitary walks' (Tate 2004). Creating the works from ten seven-day walks in Scotland's Cairngorn Mountains, *Geese Flying South* for example is a purely text-based print that retells moments, and most certainly ones of resonance for the artist. Arranged vertically, Fulton allows space for access and interpretation (Fig.26)

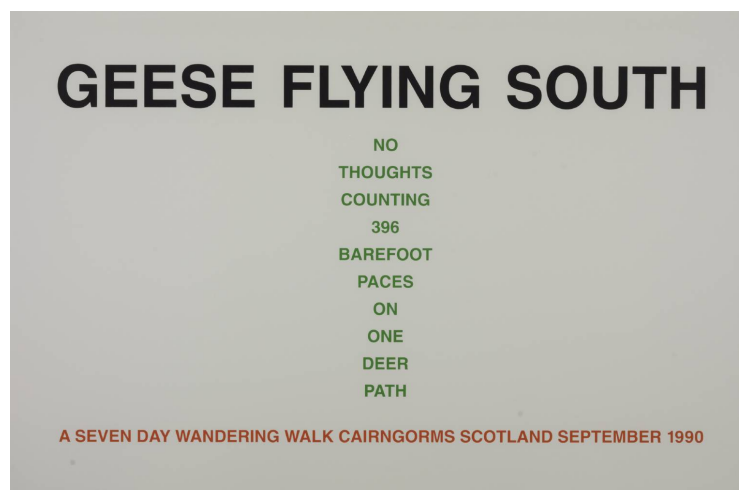


Figure 26: Hamish Fulton, *Geese Flying South*, 1990, screenprint on paper, 62.9cm x 96.5cm.

Taking up Fulton's use of restraint to open space for interpretation, and directly relating to the image (as I had done with *Hopeless Remnantic*) I relayed what I had observed or experienced:

THE SLAB OF TIMBER
APPEARS AS THOUGH IT HAS
NEVER BEEN MOVED
SINCE THE DAY IT WAS CUT/
SMALL NOTCHES HAVE BEEN
ETCHED OUT WITH A CHAINSAW/
I
TOUCH
THE
SILVERED
SURFACE
CREATED BY TIME
AND
WEATHER/
SO
SOLID
I WANT TO
TURN
IT OVER AND FEEL THE WEIGHT/
I
DECIDE
TO LEAVE IT ALONE/
IT IS EMBEDDED/
IT IS SETTLED/
IT
BELONGS

Patrick Sutczak, *New Map Series*, 2014, text.

In this series of 21 image/text works, I overlaid a *New Map* text with a separate text sheet of translucent paper which I named the *Red Texts*. The *Red Texts* were related to the work below, but not fixed to them. With that series, I wanted to allow for an alternate narrative – one that was still bound by *Oakdene*, but could be moved around. Inviting interaction with the work, a *Red Text* from one piece applied to a *New Map* of another generated ideas of intersection and possibility (Fig.27)



Figure 27: Patrick Sutczak, *New Maps and Red Texts*, 2014, digital print on paper, 21 x 29cm

By encouraging interaction and rearrangement, my personal interpretations were being re-written within the boundaries of what was there. By walking, pausing, experiencing, reading and writing landscape texts, new narratives from 'the abstraction of geospatial location and the phenomenon of being there' (Vaughan 2009, p.319) emerge and the narratives (fixed or arranged) become fluid. Vaughan continues by stating that '[i]n this way, the view of the map, the position of the viewer, the level of detail or clarity, and the poetics of interpretation, become part of the description of place' (Vaughan 2009, p.319)'. This is consistent to the layers visible on *Oakdene*: its tensions, shifts and changing landscape texts. For example, a *Red Text* relating to an open pit discovered on a 2013 *Oakdene* walk:

OPEN PIT
DISCARDED
DISOWNED
DESTROYED
DEALT WITH

YET TO BE BURIED
SPRING RAIN 2013

Patrick Sutczak, *Red Text Series*, 2014, text.

That text was in direct relation to an open pit (Fig.28), first encountered in the summer and then happened upon again a wet spring day. Filled with water, and with unusable materials and rubbish, the pit was soon to be filled in and all traces of it gone. Paired with a *New Map*, layers of experience and of human action are suggested, Removed from its parent *Map*, the texts take on a non-linear aspect.



Figure 28: Patrick Sutczak, *Site Documentation: Pit*, 2013, digital photograph.

As the *New Maps* and *Red Texts* developed, I returned to the Shallow Supers and Brood Chambers to create places of intersecting, and moveable archives. I began to see the potential of the hives as shifting sculptures and cabinets potentially storing the map of *Oakdene* in a fragmented form; all within the box but by no means defined. Artist and maker of objects Patrick Hall says that '[t]he cabinet can be seen as a metaphor for the 20th century [...] it is filled with storage and classification systems, [...] the keep-sakes of everyday life and the ephemera of personal histories' (Hall in Cochrane 2004, p.14). Hall's expansive account

of the cabinet and the archives it contains suggest the ways in which these collections can be cumulative and unstable.

Within my boxes, I set out to have my histories of *Oakdene* engagement become interactive. Replacing what would normally be an artificial honeycomb plate, I used eight sheets of clear acrylic as transparent layers onto which I inscribed walk data in ink (Fig.29). With fragmentation and rearrangement in mind, I traced only sections of data from 2013 and 2014.

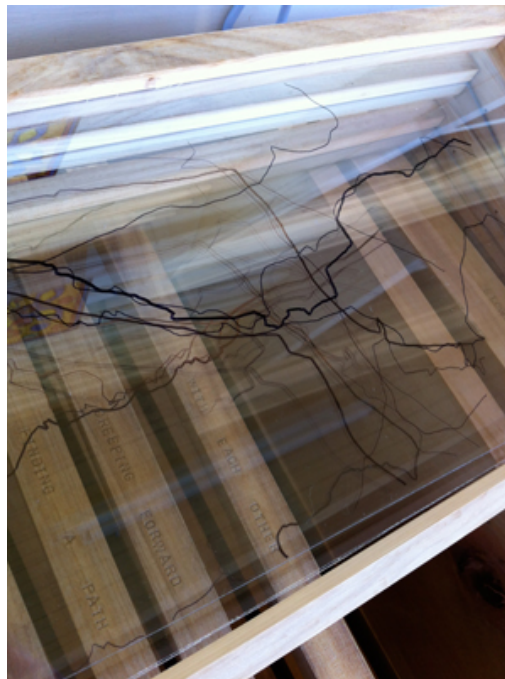


Figure 29: Patrick Sutczak, *Documentation: Hive in progress*, 2014, digital photograph.

With each Shallow Super able to hold eight frames, I created a multi-layered map of data that could be rearranged creating new points of intersection across multiple boxes. Atop of each frame I punched four short narratives into the wood which, like the texts of the *New Maps* and *Red Texts*, were linear in one arrangement but would create new stories generated through action, movement and placement.

Rising out of the boxes, the frames could be looked through, creating a sense of three-dimensional space. The walk data appeared to float in a

space between connection and disconnection. Almost circulatory, the lines are at play with each other, yet seemingly having no beginning or end in order to reflect the re-writing of experience. After completing the work I became aware of Karin Schaefer's WTC Project, a layered piece that focused on lines connected to the September 11 destruction of the Twin Towers in New York (Fig.30).

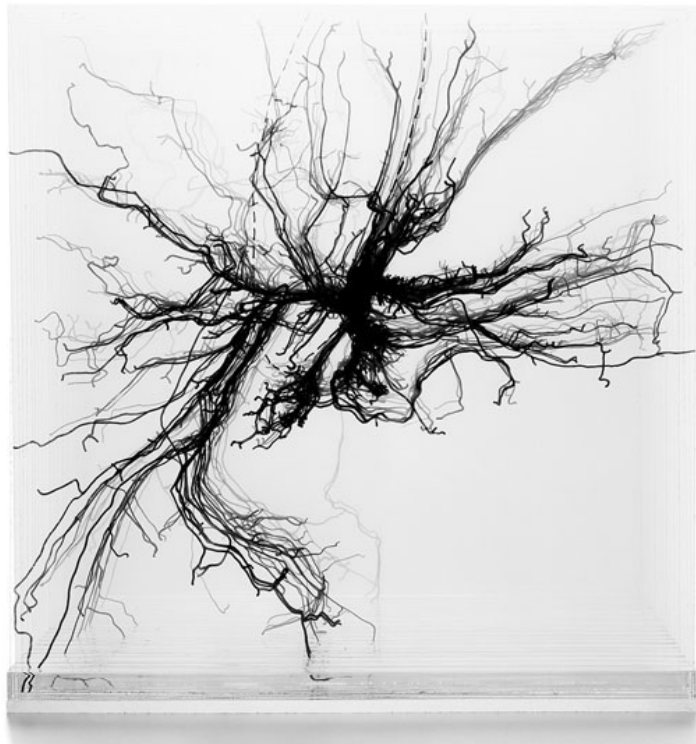


Figure 30: Karin Schaefer, *WTC Memorial Model*, 2003, paint marker on plexiglass, 30 x 30cm.

While Schaefer's work focused primarily on a point of convergence, I found a familiarity in using line as a device for connecting a person with place. Regardless of race, age or gender Schaefer focused on the traces and the data left behind. Of the work she writes:

It is made up of drawings representing the discrete routes of each victim; by mapping their starting points on the morning of September 11, the lines follow the train tracks, subway lines, ferry routes, plane courses and roads that all converged at the World Trade Centre. [...] [T]he piece explores and witnesses the once living organism of their collective connection to the site. (Schaefer 2015).

With *Oakdene* being the place connecting my work together, the converted beehive sculptures began to take a primary direction around ideas of archive, narrative, ordering and unfolding. In April 2014, the completed works were exhibited at Sawtooth ARI as a small installation that included *New Maps* and *Red Texts*, as well as a sound piece recorded on-site. The audio work consisted of a loop recorded after heavy rain on the property saw low and usually dry areas holding water and attracting frogs. The entire exhibition, titled *Field*, was an experiment in bringing together different elements culminating in a view of *Oakdene* using varying media (Fig.31).



Figure 31: Patrick Sutzak, *Field*, 2014, installation view.

Field proved to be a turning point in the project in regards to the continuation of experiments that could theoretically enter the archive. Rather than consider my practice as being skill-based, the focus became around methodologies for gathering information from which to respond. The text I was creating was growing and becoming progressively non-linear. I used video and sound to document my movement across the property, as well as photography to tune into the details of patterns in the bark of remnant trees, and of grasses moving in the wind. A series of video

works created from still photographs of the sky above *Oakdene* acknowledged the vistas created by the flat open plains where the horizon was low and the sky was large. Instead of stasis, these works revealed the constant unpredictability of a turbulent space.

As I continued to walk, observe and make, *Oakdene* continued to change dramatically around me. Preparations for pivot irrigators were almost complete and areas were once segregated into fields had shifted boundaries. In a newly defined field, for example, all that remained were isolated fence posts, the wire connecting them together down and coiled for removal (Fig.32). Like the trees around them, and the wire between them, they would soon be gone too. My archives were storing experiences and observations, yet the narratives of *Oakdene* continued being re-written.



Fig.32: Patrick Sutczak, *Shifting Field*, 2015, digital photograph.

Toward the conclusion of the project, the changes that I had observed over time enticed me to arrive at a certain subtlety with the final works. The largeness of the sky, the constant atmospheric change above me was reflected in the earth below me. Change was continual and assured. The

redundant fenceposts became central to my dialogue with the gallery space. Having lost their functionality, the poles in the field appeared to me as an archive as much as the beehives, maps and data that I had been experimenting with. Without the ability to create a boundary, the posts were readable within the landscape and signifiers of changes occurring there. To me, in the field, I responded to their quietness and as a result, I began working toward a resolution between primary experience and secondary objects, site and gallery.

The final video work of the skies above Oakdene became complimentary to ideas of making space visible, and creating an installation piece that was intended to be somewhat contemplative, yet create clear definitions on either side of a boundary, or fence line.



Fig.33: Patrick Sutzak, *Preparing for gallery installation (documentation)*, 2015, digital photograph

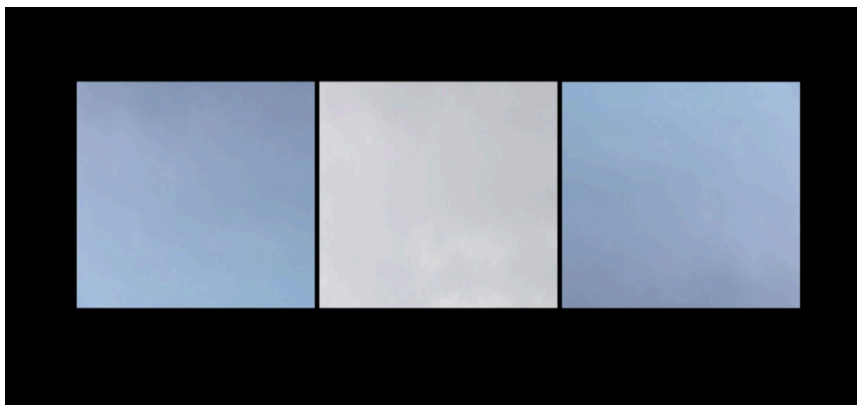


Fig.34: Patrick Sutzak, *Blue Sky Triptych*, 2015, digital video

By combining the stark white poles in the gallery space with two versions of video using still images of the skies above *Oakdene*, I felt the restrained use of sound would enhance and allude to the human and non-human interactions of the property. Through hidden speakers at either of the gallery space, the untitled sound recordings were in contrast to each other. One featured the ambience of the property. Over a period of six minutes, the sounds of different birds could be heard calling out, chiming in, and disappearing again – small birds sharing the space with the larger and more dominant White Cockatoo. The other recording was of the sound of my feet as I walked, moved through and navigated the remnants of *Oakdene*.

The overall final installation in the white cube gallery space was a considered approach to condensing the tensions, nuances, and vibrancy of the agricultural setting, while remaining open to the emergent creative possibilities of repeated site engagement over time.

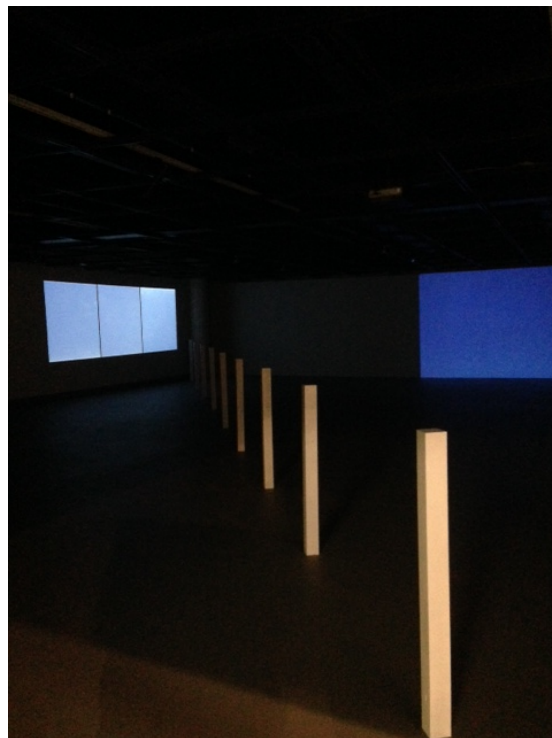


Fig.35: Patrick Sutczak, *Academy Gallery Assessment Installation (documentation)*, 2015, digital video

Conclusion

The map actively searches for other maps. Objects can be built and placed on the map, guaranteeing an afterlife for ephemeral projects. Preserved and rebuilt, they can be experienced in new forms that are difficult to imagine at the outset (O'Rourke K, 2013, p.247)

Before writing this conclusion, I felt it important, necessary even, that I visit *Oakdene* one last time on the project. As I had done on my first visit in March of 2013, I set foot on the property with no plan and no set direction. In May 2015, I went there to be within the space, be directed by new observations and follow waypoints that revealed themselves rather than being laid out for me. I wanted to make my own way as I had done many times before.

After I parked the car on *Oakdene* a few hundred meters west off the Midland Highway, I stepped out onto the road. What had been dusty and dry some days, and wet and sludgy underfoot on others, was then simply compact. I hadn't opened any gates nor bounced across any potholes. There was no fence to amble up to and no tree to lay my hand upon and look up into an old and chaotic canopy. There were just acres of open land being tended to by sweeping circular mechanical arms drip-feeding the soil, bringing much needed nutrition. The western remnants lay beyond on the fringes, appearing seemingly unchanged from a few months before, but closer inspection always revealed a different circumstance.

I closed the car door, and leaned against it looking out over a private landscape that had been shared with me for a time. *Oakdene* seemed different. As I basked in the silence but for an ever so faint splattering of water from an irrigator span some distance away, I thought about being alone. It was the unique position I was in, and had been from the start. This project began with me going and being alone, to forge a relationship with the property; to discover it and to see it from the inside, up close and in all moods, and listen to its stories as they were read to me, all by myself and fully aware of the privilege. I thought of memories and the preciousness of such things.

Looking into the Midland landscape provided one view. Being *inside*, walking through the paddocks in the rain, the sun, the mist and watching the violent swaying of remnant eucalypts in high winds, or taking in the comfort of their shadows in summer provided another. I welcomed the relief of the morning sun on my neck to combat the rising cold upon my exposed and folded arms.

As I drew a deep breath, I wondered what *Oakdene* really was and what the experience of walking around and centralising that particular place as the heart of my project and my practice at this point in time meant. Had I re-told *Oakdene* appropriately? Time passed, and as I eventually slung on my pack and turned on my GPS for the last stroll, I asked myself the most important question – *whom have I told it for?* I set off and thought again about the map on the kitchen table years ago and Jill's enthusiasm for the special places she loved. The 'sea' of grass to the west she spoke so passionately about was indeed there. I had found it and understood. I remember in the height of the 2013 summer casting off my pack after a long and arduous walk initially surveying the property. I knelt down among that sea and observed. The sun was hot, and the wind was threatening enough to make a sudden fire a rapid and very real threat, but still I bedded down for the experience of watching the tall, dry grass create waves of movement and noise.

With such moments and experiences, my work quickly leaned toward diverse modes of representation. My approach was that *Oakdene* could never be framed in an image with sky and land and trees. It should be lived and viewed as a series of conversations, a series of responses that contained thoughts and reactions – some spontaneous and some considered. The land itself is a text straddling past, present and future concurrently and in a dynamic state of being. My presence there was just another human intervention and somewhat fleeting in the scheme of things. Where once the Tasmanian Midland region was home to 'one to two hundred hunters helping to clothe and feed 500 hundred people' (Kirkpatrick 2003, p.49) it has long been a place of private farming enterprise and output, and toiled over as such.

On that last walk I left the open fields and entered the remnants. As I walked, reminisced, took it in, and enjoyed, I thought of the chaos and of

the complexity. I thought of systems, and of fracturing those systems, and of conventions. After some hours, I sat down by a small and familiar dam in the heart of the remnants. Presumably forgotten and of no apparent use, I went there often. I dropped my pack, fished around inside for water and settled myself on the wet clay banks of long upturned earth. As I sat, I observed ripples on the dam's surface, looked skyward to the scores of screeching white cockatoos passing by overhead, and peered into the dense understory attempting to visually tune to the sounds created by active marsupials moving across the forest floor. I felt connected. I drank the last of my water, screwed the cap back on, and tossed the empty bottle into my pack.

As I reached my car, I placed my pack in the back, took one last look around, and drove away.

Now, as I sit at my desk with Denis Wood's *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas* open on my lap, I read over the introduction by Ira Glass. When he encountered Wood's Boylean Heights maps he 'loved how impractical they were' and that 'most maps were about doing a job' (2013, p.10). The work I created for this project wasn't what I thought I would make in the beginning, and *Oakdene* turned out to be far more complex than I had imagined. As *Oakdene* underwent changes, so did I. My creative outputs shifted with the boundaries of the property, with my focus tested between the impact of uprooted eucalypts and a puddle filled with banjo frogs. Over 4000 acres, I became entangled in the language of the landscape, teasing out threads, and listening out for parts I could understand. In trying to read between the lines of the landscape, I discovered that there were more texts, and more lines.

Like contours of the land, my interactions were fluctuations that rose and fell and shaped what became an intimate, personal and subjective representation of a place in the Tasmanian Midlands. The experiments created were a reflection of those contours with each presenting a different text as I came across them. I remember once as I sat in an open field alone under a vast sky far from the reach of anyone, all I heard was noise. In the hush of the gallery, my representation of *Oakdene* echoes as an invitation to enter this conversation.

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